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Taiwan Authorities Enforce GE Testing on Organic Soybeans and Implement New Documentation Requirements for Corn and Soybean Imports

Report Categories:
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Oilseeds and Products
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Report Highlights:
On August 7, 2014, Taiwan's Agriculture and Food Agency (AFA) of Council of Agriculture (COA) began screening for genetically engineered (GE) materials in organic soybeans. Several shipments of U.S. organic soybeans were tested and one rejected since enforcement began. Starting November 1, 2014, Taiwan customs authorities will mandate the distinction of GE and non-GE shipments of corn and soybean shipments through separate commodity description codes (i.e. CCC codes).

General Information:

Background

Please see GAIN Reports TW14005, 14013, 14007, 14020, 14025 and 14033.

GE Import Inspection on Organic Soybeans:

In line with Taiwan's "Organic Agricultural Product" and Organic Agricultural Processed Product Certification Management Regulations," on August 7, 2014, Taiwan's Agriculture and Food Agency (AFA), Council of Agriculture (COA) began screening for genetically engineered (GE) materials in organic soybeans via routine polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing at the border and re-packing house. AFA has designated the non-profit research institution, Food Industry Research and Development Institute (FIRDI) to conduct the PCR tests.

FIRDI runs two tiers of PRC testing. The first is a qualitative screening test with test result reading either positive or negative based on a 0.01% Limit of Detection (LOD). If the qualitative screen is negative, the product is allowed to be labeled and marketed as organic. If the qualitative screen is positive, the importer can apply for the second-tier quantitative test. The second-tier quantitative test reveals the percentage of GE content based on a 0.1% Level of Quantitation (LOQ). If the quantitative screen reveals less than 0.1% of GE material, the test result is non-detectable and the product can be sold as organic.

Importers of organic products pay the PCR testing fees. The cost per sample of raw material soybean is NT$8,000 (approximately US$265) or NT$9,000 ($300) for processed soy food for initial qualitative screen and NT$6,000 (approximately US$200) for quantitative test. According to FIRDI, each tier of PCR testing should be completed within 14 working days.

Current Situation:

As of October 20, a total of 30 samples were tested, of which 24 were yellow skin and six were black skin soybeans. All six black skin soybean samples tested negative. Five of the 24 organic soybean samples tested positive at the first (qualitative) screening with a 0.01% LOD. Taiwan regulations allow the importer to request an appeal quantitative test within 15 days. Three of the five samples applied for follow-up quantitative testing. One sample was found to contain 0.3% of GE material and was imported as conventional; the other two samples were determined not detectable at the 0.1% LOQ.

New Import Shipping Documents for Customs Clearance Requirements

Starting November 1, 2014, Taiwan customs authorities will mandate the distinction of GE and non-GE shipments of corn and soybean shipments through separate commodity description codes (i.e. CCC codes). (Please see Appendix I for a list of these codes.)

In addition, on October 19, TFDA's Northern Center announced new shipping documentation

requirements initiated at the request of a Legislative Yuan member(s). According to this new administrative order, non-GE corn and soybean imports must be accompanied by either an "identity preservation" certificate, issued by an independent certifier or government authorities, such as state department of agriculture; or a laboratory GE inspection report. For GE shipments, an additional statement is required on the invoice and a list of all Taiwan registered and approved GE events with the unique product identifier information must be provided; for instance, MON-04032-6 for Monsanto developed roundup ready soybean event. As of reporting date, Taiwan has granted registration approval for 17 GE soybean events. Thus, importers are expected to list all 17 GE approved events on the invoice. There are currently 54 GE corn events approved in Taiwan. According to this new administrative order, GE corn importers must list all 54 events on the invoice.

Industry reported concerns directly to Taiwan Food and Drug Administration (TFDA) during an October 23 meeting. During the meeting, TFDA officials indicated the new documentation requirements for GE products may be postponed; however, the new documentation requirements for non-GE shipments should be implemented on schedule – November 1, 2014, on a billing date basis.

APPENDIX I – CCC Codes for GE and Non-GE Corn and Soybeans and Products

CCC Code	Description of Goods
1005.90.00.90-5	Other maize (corn)
1005.90.00.91-4	Other genetically modified maize(corn)
1005.90.00.92-3	Other non-genetically modified maize(corn)
1102.20.00.00-1	Maize (corn) flour
1102.20.00.10-9	Genetically modified maize(corn) flour
1102.20.00.20-7	Non-genetically modified maize(corn) flour
1103.13.00.00-9	Groats and meal of corn (maize)
1103.13.00.10-7	Groats and meal of genetically modified corn (maize)
1103.13.00.20-5	Groats and meal of non-genetically modified corn (maize)
1104.23.00.00-6	Other worked maize (corn)
1104.23.00.10-4	Other worked genetically modified maize(corn)
1104.23.00.20-2	Other worked non-genetically modified maize(corn)
1201.90.00.90-7	Other soybeans, whether or not broken
1201.90.00.91-6	Other genetically modified soybeans, whether or not broken
1201.90.00.92-5	Other non-genetically modified soybeans, whether or not broken
1208.10.00.00-6	Flours and meals of soya beans
1208.10.00.10-4	Flours and meals of genetically modified soya beans
1208.10.00.20-2	Flours and meals of non-genetically modified soya beans